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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000537

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [SOCI](#) [SCUL](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: BAGHDAD EPRT: SHEIKH ALI-HATEM SPEAKS ON AQI,
IIP, SOI AND GOI AFTER VBIED INCIDENT

REF: A. BAGHDAD 400
[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 457

Classified By: E-PRT Leader Eric Whitaker, Reason: Section 1.4 (b) and (d)

CORRECTED COPY OF BAGHDAD 533

[1](#)1. (U) This is a Baghdad 2 E-PRT reporting cable.

[1](#)2. (C) Summary: During a February 12 meeting with MNF-I Officers and E-PRT Team Leader, Sheikh Ali Hatem al-Suleiman, a controversial Anbar Province figure, condemned the February 11 VBIED attack against him, which he attributed to AQI, and declared efforts to fight AQI would continue. He said that the GOI needed an "awakening" to the importance of national reconciliation, and should support "Awakening" groups, which he asserted were losing patience with the GOI and might revert back to insurgent activity if their concerns are not properly addressed. Regarding his recent public threats to the Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) in Anbar Province, Hatem denied press reports on the subject, but complained about the Islamic party's role in Anbar. Hatem argued against replacing Iraqi Army units on Baghdad's Karada peninsula with National Police, alleging that the latter was infiltrated by militants, and was sectarian. He also commented on the situation in Anbar province, where he said people remained poor and tribal leaders rejected sectarian parties. A visit to his headquarters in Karada prior to the meeting revealed a site of extensive devastation. End Summary.

Sheikh Ali Hatem: AQI are "Dogs Who Deserve to Die"

[1](#)3. (C) Controversial Anbari figure Sheikh Ali Hatem al-Suleiman told MNF-I Officers and E-PRT Team Leader on February 12 that the February 11 car-bomb attack against him on Baghdad's Karada peninsula was a "dirty act" that would not weaken his resolve to fight Al-Qaida in Iraq (AQI). He said that the AQI were "dogs who deserved to die." Ali Hatem declared that efforts to weed out AQI would continue unabated.

[1](#)4. (C) Sheikh Ali Hatem argued against replacing the Iraqi Army (IA) with the National Police (NP) to secure the Karada peninsula in central Baghdad, citing the number of IED and VBIED incidents. He said that the NP had been tested in several areas, and were found to have sectarian leanings that lead to violence. Ali Hatem said the NP is infiltrated by militia members. He concluded that the IA is ten times more effective than the NP.

Sheikh Ali Hatem Recounts Karada VBIED Incident

[1](#)5. (C) Returning to the VBIED incident, he said that two

vehicles had attacked his office from a "weak point," and that one vehicle followed the other to finish the work of the first. Although six of his guards perished, he regarded it as a miracle that none of his staff or guests had been killed. Ali Hatem said that he had gone upstairs to his office 30 minutes before the explosions occurred. Fortunately, he escaped major injuries by bending over to pick up a dropped cellular telephone at the time of the blast. This was the sixth attempt on his life, he claimed. (Note: Judging by appearances, Sheikh Ali Hatem did not/not sustain obvious injuries from the blasts. End note.)

¶16. (C) Sheikh Ali Hatem said 15 minutes before the VBIED incident a vehicle had parked near his guards, with the driver asking for the location of a gas station. He claimed that VBIEDs are prepared near his office, and mentioned torture houses found in the Jadriya area of the peninsula as possible locations for VBIED preparation.

Sheikh Ali Hatem: "Government Needs Awakening"

¶17. (C) Sheikh Ali Hatem said that the Government of Iraq (GOI) needs to understand the urgency for national reconciliation. He noted that it was a sensitive, dangerous period, and that he had relayed to senior GOI officials the necessity to take national reconciliation seriously. According to Ali Hatem, reconciliation will require a "serious partnership" and the support of Awakening movements for the GOI to succeed. He warned that if the GOI failed to address Awakening members' concerns, these forces could threaten to walk off their jobs. He said that members of Awakening movements are very tired, and left with few

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choices.

¶18. (C) Sheikh Ali Hatem said that Prime Minister Maliki is an honorable man whose inner circle is tainted. He charged that although the Awakening is in need of moral support, Advisor to the PM Dr. Bassima has attempted to undermine the Awakening movement by organizing competing efforts, which, in Ali Hatem's opinion, is "fighting us in a dirty way." Sheikh Ali Hatem said his followers need to provide for their families, and are starting to complain. He said that they could sustain their efforts for perhaps two to six months more, and that he would not be able to convince them to continue their cause beyond five to six months. The political process was failing, he declared, and the Movement has been hurt.

Sheikh Ali Hatem Denies Threat to Rise Up Against GOI

¶19. (C) Responding to media accounts of alleged threats against the IIP by both he and Anbar colleague Hamid al-Heiss, Hatem sought to downplay his role in the affair. He claimed that the Awakening had increased the intake of Sons of Iraq (SOI) participants into the IP by six to 20 percent through his influence upon the Prime Minister. Sheikh Ali Hatem added although he took issue with the GOI, he considered his actions to be within lawful bounds and reinforced that he would act honorably. The Awakening Movement is a "stick" of the government and the law, and hits "those who are not straight." The GOI uses the stick when it is convenient, and drops it when it is not to its advantage. The Awakening Movement does not go beyond the law, and will not go back on its word; it is needed for Iraqi stability.

Sheikh Ali Hatem Comments on Situation in Anbar

¶10. (C) Sheikh Ali Hatem also talked about Anbar Province,

where he said there was no fuel, electricity, or other public services. He asked why the Awakening should be quiet, when CF money is being stolen. According to Ali Hatem, the Prime Minister could activate a state of emergency and dissolve the Anbar Provincial Council to form a new one. Although he had asked the Prime Minister more than once to do so, he said that it had not been done due to "political interests." He warned that the tribes of Anbar might use violence against the Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP), which he regarded as a sectarian element. The people of Anbar would not accept Islamic parties; they prefer moderate parties and a democracy that protects the rights of all, according to Ali Hatem. As it stands, they are kept "hungry" by the actions of the IIP. He closed by thanking the participants for their visit; their concern was meaningful. The GOI had not visited, but only telephoned. He noted that he would relocate to his Mansour office, and work from there until his Karada headquarters (located on the grounds of the ISCI Party) building was rebuilt.

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